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What are we going to do about the Pacific

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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"WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT THE PACIFIC"

Broadcast over NBC, April 30, 1943, by Congressman Mike Mansfield.

The war in the Pacific is just as important and more significant than the war in Europe. The conflict in the Pacific will settle our future for generations to come. It is time we stop laboring under the delusion that the European war is our major struggle and that the Pacific front is only a sideshow. Too many of us seem to forget that in Europe we have two strong Allies fighting with us - England and Russia - while in the Pacific we are shouldering the major burden. As for the strategy of concentrating against Hitler first - instead of looking at the war as a global struggle in which the Pacific is of equal importance - that was dictated by the Allied leaders immediately after Pearl Harbor, reiterated at Casablanca, and emphasized in speeches since that time.

There has been talk about our Allies partly demobilizing after the defeat of Hitler. We hope that is not true but be that as it may, we know that there will be no demobilization for us until Japan is conquered. The longer we delay our offensive in the Pacific, with all it entails, the greater will be our casualties. It is lamentable that the importance of the Pacific area has not been fully recognized all along. There would then, perhaps, have been no need for Prime Minister Curtin of Australia to say that he hoped the Pacific would not be the front where "we lost the war". We might just as well face the fact now that the Japanese are our most dangerous and particular enemy and that our civilization is at stake.

Time is running against us in the Pacific. Japan has conquered, exclusive of China, an area of 1,070,530 square miles and a population of 112,698,919 since December 7, 1941. What do these figures mean? In short, they mean that Japan now has the resources to wage a war for many years to come. Japanese Commerce and Industry Minister Kishi stated the situation clearly when he said on February 6th of this year that "A complete self supply, self-sufficient structure has been founded. All our fears held prior to the war have been cleared away".

Japan is closer to consolidating her gains for years to come than she ever dared dream our stupidity would permit. The war in the South Pacific has given us successes in Guadalcanal and in the Papuan portion of New Guinea, but those victories were hard won and long drawn out. They took over six months to achieve and were confined to relatively small areas. The Japanese troops there did fulfill their missions. They kept much of our air, sea, and land power in the Pacific tied up for a long period, and that time was invaluable to Tokyo in allowing it to organize and exploit the reserve of basic materials in the other sections under Japanese domination. In retrospect, it would appear that we are, in spite of splendid successes, just getting by in the South Pacific, and, while we are concentrating our small forces there, the Chinese are being starved out and worn out because of our inability to get materials to them. It is not a matter of too late and too little for China, it is a matter of almost nothing at all.

China has lost 5,000,000 soldiers in 8,000 battles and 10,000,000 civilians besides. Japan actually occupies 1/9th of China's land, controls over 1/3 of her people, has the richest rice and wheat lands, all the river and most of the rail transportation, and the best cotton lands of the Chinese Republic. Because of little developed resources, China has been defeated time and time again, but she remains unconquered. However, she cannot go on indefinitely without outside aid. She may, if starved of necessary materials, cease to fight. In that case I need not point out to you the perilous consequences to us.

American prestige has never been so low as it is now in China. Why? Because our entrance into the war has made China's lot worse and the promises we so freely made to her have not been fulfilled. China has reached her darkest hour and as Chiang-Kai-shek has stated "present difficulties surpass those of all the last six years". China is barely hanging on, fighting to stave off disaster until help can reach her. Today, Japan holds China in the grip of a blockade by land, sea and air, the tightest probably that ~~has ever~~ been imposed on any country. Two routes of supply are open to her - a land route from Russia bringing in

about 2000 tons of supplies a month and an air route from India bringing in an unknown amount. China is the hardest pressed of all the nations in the world today but her possibilities are the greatest. Her job now is to keep up her unbeatable spirit and to improve her food situation. Our job is to give her more air support, to lower the odds against her, and to bomb Japanese productive plants and shipping.

China is our best hope in the Far East. She has held Japan in check and she has the necessary manpower. She has put 2,000,000 Japanese out of commission. If Japan had not lost these men what would have been the fate of Australia, New Zealand, and possibly Alaska? Let us give to China - and soon - the tools she needs. We can rest assured that she will do her utmost to finish the job.

Before this war is over we shall consider China as a full-fledged ally and on a par, as she should be now, with Great Britain and Russia. It may be that China will become our most important ally because it is a foregone conclusion that the war in the Pacific will take far longer than the war in Europe. It is up to us to get just as much help to our gallant friends in China as we possibly can, and if it means performing the impossible, well, we must do it. For instance, we are producing standard transport planes, in quantity, that can carry 6-ton cargoes at 200 miles an hour. Henry J. Kaiser stated on April 6, 1943 that he is seeking a government contract to build a new type metal cargo plane capable of carrying 30 tons 4,000 miles, or 21 tons 10,000 miles at a speed of 200 miles an hour. Here is the solution, not only for China's great need but for overcoming the submarine menace in the Atlantic as well. These flying boxcars may well be our answer to China's cry for aid.

Madame Chiang Kai-shek has said "Know thyself; know thy enemy". Do we know the Japanese? Do we realize that they are a fanatical, determined, and brutal people? Do we realize yet the significance of their inhuman treatment of the Chinese, the Koreans, and the American flyers captured in the Tokyo raid? We must face these factors if we are to understand our enemies. The Japanese know their business far better than we know ours. They have been planning this struggle for many years, and this war did not begin with Hitler's invasion of Poland but with Japan's invasion of Manchuria on September 18, 1931. Even before that, in 1927, Premier Baron Tanaka presented a memorial to the Emperor in which he stated that it was the duty of Japan to conquer Manchuria and Mongolia; when that was done China would be conquered; when that was accomplished the South Seas area would be taken; and when that was done, Japan would conquer the world. The authenticity of the Tanaka Memorial has been denied by the Japanese Foreign Office but events since 1931 give substance to its contents. In further proof of this aim Mr. K. Muto, Chief of the Information Office of the General Affairs Board of Manchuria, said in March of this year, "This war decides the destiny of Greater East Asia. It decides the rise or fall of the Japanese people. If we win this war, we shall become the leaders of the world". What do you Americans think of that statement?

In all honesty we are not yet defeating the Japanese. It is true we have won at Guadalcanal, Papua, the Coral and Bismark Sea, and Midway but those victories only helped us to maintain a defensive position. We have lost Guam, Wake, Kiska, Attu, Agattu, Little Kiska, and the Philippines - though American-Filipino bands are still waging guerrilla warfare against the Japs there. Those losses represent American territory and to date none of it has been recaptured. We have been taught the shame of unconditional surrender at Wake, Corregidor and Bataan by these small, myopic, buck-toothed sons of Nippon. They are the most dangerous enemy we have ever faced and their defeat can only be brought about by carrying the war to Japan itself and exterminating its fanatical war clique.

The Japanese have everything to gain and not much to lose. They will fight to the bitter end. We know, from experience, the determination of these people. You know what happened on Guadalcanal after our soldiers went in and up to the time the enemy evacuated the island? Over 6,000 Japanese were killed and only 127 captured. We won, yes, but the price was high and the Japanese did not surrender unconditionally.

At present the Japanese are too close to the American mainland for comfort. Attu, which is only 2000 miles from Tokyo, and Kiska, which has such a fine natural harbor that it can accommodate more than three times as many ships, of all classes, as Pearl Harbor, are in the possession of our enemies. There, the Japanese are building runways for bomber and fighter craft and are undertaking constructions of a type which indicates a planned permanent occupation. Our bomber raids have been stepped up tremendously these past two months, but the Japanese are waiting out these attacks in their hideaways and then returning to their construction work, sometimes even using the rocks broken up by American bombs for building purposes.

The completion of the airfields at Kiska and Attu will provide the enemy with a series of stepping stones from Tokyo, which even fighter planes could span. And think of what long range bombers, if given the chance, can and will do - to Alaska and our own Northwest.

The Aleutians offer a war path to Japan's front door or a bridge by which the aggressors can reach America and are today the most important area in the war. The fog has kept us from retaking these bits of American territory, say our public spokesmen, but the fog has not hindered the Japs. The fog isn't all in the Aleutians either, and I feel we should have definite information as to why the Japanese were allowed to land and why they have not been driven out. Then there would be less fog for all of us.

The Japanese have successfully invaded the western Aleutians, sailing into them expertly, displaying a knowledge of harbors and channels that could only be based on years of secret sounding of those waters. I fear they know the Aleutians better than we.

What can we do to better our position in the Pacific? Here are some suggestions: We can concentrate enough naval and air forces to drive the Japanese out of the American territory they occupy in the Aleutians. We can then use those islands and from them conquer bases in the Kuriles as springboards against Japan itself. We can send the 7% of our 6,200 planes produced each month to MacArthur as he requested. We can form a real Pacific War Council with China as a full-fledged partner and learn about Japan from her. And we can develop the transport plane along lines already indicated to speed supplies to all our forces scattered around the Pacific and over the Himalayas to China itself.

The suggestions, if carried out, would improve our position in the Pacific and hasten the conclusion of this barbaric struggle. Added to them should be a realistic press policy. The American people are not children, and they realize that playing up the good news and playing down the bad will not win the war. We are tired of a public relations policy based on the idea of "what the people don't know won't hurt them". We say too much about small accomplishments and too little about big failures. It would be good policy in this war to keep our eye on the ball and not on the grandstand. We seek not plaudits and acclaim but victory, absolute and complete, for our United States. May God guide our thoughts, our prayers, and our actions to that end.

"What are We Going to Do About the Pacific?"

Delivered

April 30, 1943

N.B.C. Blue Network

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~~Thank You.~~

Mr. Speaker, under leave to extend my remarks
in the Record, I include the following radio
address entitled "What Are We Going to do
About the Pacific?" delivered by me on Friday,
May 30th, 1943 over the National Broadcasting
System network.